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You Are Not Alone

Welcome to the teaching profession! Often named the noblest of all professions, teaching is certainly among the most important jobs in the world. No one can doubt that teachers have broad, long-lasting impact on the lives of children. A deeper purpose, a larger vision of service motivates most new teachers—not money or prestige (though both should be greater!). The work is indeed rewarding. Nothing quite compares to a student’s face lighting up to learning, or having a student you taught years ago come back to visit you in your classroom. Teaching is about facilitating learning, growing, and developing. Teaching provides you the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of children as they acquire the skills and knowledge to learn effectively and successfully in school.

As you interact with students during your hectic beginning years, stay in touch with the reasons that brought you to teaching in the first place. You, too, are beginning on a new path of learning and growth. Much of the time, you will be working alone in your classroom with little opportunity to pause and reflect on your new role as a teacher. You may at times feel isolated, insecure, and unsure of your abilities. Stop to reflect on your strengths, acknowledge what you do well, and focus on what needs to be accomplished. Try not to become too overwhelmed by all that there is to do, because teaching is like housework—there is always more you can do! Establish priorities, and focus on important tasks first. One new teacher was told by her mentor to first get through each day, and then begin to plan for a week. Before you know it, you can plan an entire unit, month, or even trimester! Few people will ever understand how hard you work, how much physical and emotional energy you put into your job, or the multifaceted

role you serve as an elementary school teacher. Although you may occasionally receive a compliment or an encouraging word, few adults will know the fine job you do inside the classroom and the attention you pay to each student. Even your caring, compassion, and concern for children, the core reasons you became a teacher, may go unnoticed. But, stay positive, even when the going gets tough. Don't be discouraged. There will be many ups and downs. You will doubt your judgment and decisions frequently. It is important to guard against becoming disheartened during the frenzied pace of the first year. But, give yourself credit for all the wonderful things you are doing for your students, too. Relax, and have some fun. Laugh a little! Enjoy the students and all the wonderful things they have to offer you. Continue your good work. You are on your way to actualizing an important mission—a claim few other professions can make.

After the scrutiny of a lengthy student-teaching and credentialing process, you may, as many new teachers report, feel suddenly adrift. You are on your own. No university faculty or supervisors are there to provide a safety net. No friendly, familiar faces can be counted on for advice. In the months ahead, you need to find new sources of support from people who can help and support you to prosper as a teacher. These mentors and colleagues will show you how to navigate the complexities of the school system. They will welcome you personally and professionally and will provide a social and emotional support system. You are not alone. As you become better acquainted with the teachers, staff, and community of your new school, you will gradually learn what you need to know. You will refine your vision of what it means to be a teacher, and your personal philosophy of teaching will emerge. You will move toward a greater sense of teacher efficacy and confidence when you say to yourself, "I know I can teach any and all of these kids!" You will grow professionally and personally, becoming more comfortable with your new teaching role and professional responsibilities. Indulge yourself during this process to experience all that you can, try new things, challenge yourself, and take risks, knowing that you will become a stronger, better teacher for the children entrusted to your care.

BASIC EMPLOYEE INFORMATION

Make sure you have the following basic employee information:

- Copy of your contract
- School and district rosters
- Benefit forms
- District calendar
- Current curriculum vitae (CV)

Start a special file folder for your key professional documents. Keep it handy, and update it each year. Begin a second file for copies of your formal and informal evaluations, your annual goals, any professional development training, and copies of transcripts from recent coursework. Keep dated receipts for purchases made for your classroom. You may not get reimbursed, but save them for your taxes.

FITTING IN

Visit your assigned school at least one or two weeks before classes begin. It is important to learn about the social and cultural climate of your school and the surrounding neighborhood. Get to know the community. Subscribe to a local newspaper. Familiarize yourself with the attendance boundaries of this particular school, and then walk through the neighborhoods and shops. Think about the backgrounds, socioeconomic status, cultures, ethnicities, languages, and demographics represented in the community. Perhaps your school draws from several neighborhoods. How do these neighborhoods contrast?

Now, take a walk around the school, both inside and out. You probably have toured the school during your job interview, but perhaps you did not get to spend much time feeling your way around. You will sense your school's climate the minute you enter it. Is the atmosphere conducive to learning? Does it feel like a caring, student-friendly place? Does it feel student centered or teacher centered? Tour the halls, and look into classrooms. Locate the library, resource center, the computer lab or technology center, the teachers' workroom, the multipurpose room/stage, art room, the teachers' and students' restrooms, and the main office. You will see many new faces. Don't be shy. Stop in to say hello to the principal. In most schools, you will be assigned a mentor. Confer with the principal about who this will be, and get to know the mentor. Your mentor will be an excellent resource, especially at the beginning of the year when you have *a lot* of questions. Get to know the administrative assistants and the custodians. They will be important people in your life! Introduce yourself to all classified and certificated staff members you happen to meet. Visiting your new school as often as possible before the opening day provides you with an excellent opportunity to meet your new colleagues before they are faced with their own day-to-day teaching demands. Use the School Roster (Resource 1.1) form to make notes. Allow yourself some unstructured time to get a feel for the school before you're engulfed in opening-week staff meetings, orientation sessions, and setting up your own classroom and preparing for the first days of school.

As you meet colleagues, you will begin to learn not only names and roles but also the informal norms and expectations of your new workplace. In some schools, beginning teachers find an open, welcoming atmosphere. In others, staff members act toward one another in a more private, reserved manner. The social context of the school—its subtle web of unwritten rules, values, expectations, and relationships among staff members, students, and parents, and their personal backgrounds—will directly influence your teaching and your interactions with colleagues and students. But, be yourself, and try to feel comfortable in your new surroundings. Take time to observe, and refrain from making snap judgments. As you listen and learn, continue to get along with everyone.

In addition to physically spending time at your new school, be sure to visit the district and school virtually. Most districts and individual school sites have websites full of rich information, including school and district policies, mission statements, special programs, school calendars, and employee profiles. You may even find photos of schoolwide events and celebrations. In many schools, individual teachers have classroom websites.

Exploring these sites is an excellent way to familiarize yourself with the culture and learning expectations of your new school.

Strategies to Help You Fit In

- Learn names immediately—study the staff roster, and practice pronouncing each name aloud. Create and post a photo poster in your classroom of familiar faces and names. Include aides, custodians, yard duty personnel, librarians, and other support staff. This handy reference will be invaluable to both you and your students.
- Use good manners.
- Dress professionally. Your attire is very important—it shows respect for yourself, your school, and the profession. Some schools reserve Fridays for casual dress wear or school spirit wear. Find out your school's protocol for these special days, and be sure to participate.
- Become acquainted with one or more teachers in neighboring classrooms and with those who teach the same grade level you do. Enjoy their company, and find something similar in your backgrounds. Ask about regular grade-level meetings, and find out who your grade-level coordinator is.
- Compliment a teacher who has an especially attractive, well-arranged classroom. Ask for tips, and be generous with compliments. Offer to share something that another teacher might like in your room.
- Make it a point to hand in requested paperwork and online forms to the office on time. Make sure you know your duty-assignment schedule and policies (recess or playground, bus, and lunchtime duty).
- Visit the faculty room, and regularly eat lunch with the other teachers—don't get in the habit of eating lunch isolated in your classroom to catch up on paperwork. This provides an important time to get to know other teachers, to listen and share ideas (be careful not to talk about other teachers), and to bond.
- Be open to sharing ideas and resources.
- When you are assigned to recess duty, be on time and be alert. Take the opportunity to watch students interact. As a new teacher, your familiarity with students other than those in your class will be limited. Get to know students from a variety of grade levels. Don't talk to other adults unnecessarily while you are on duty. Your responsibility is first and foremost the safety of the students.
- Make sure your students do not roam the halls distracting others—avoid excusing them from your classroom unnecessarily with bathroom passes, library passes, or various errands.
- Join your local teachers' association, even if your district doesn't require it. Begin learning about association bargaining and politics, but don't get involved your first year.
- Join your "Rainbow Club" or social club. Contribute money cheerfully for faculty birthday gifts, cards, flowers, wedding, new faculty, and baby or hospital remembrances.
- Avoid cliques. Don't repeat rumors, complain, or spread gossip.
- Avoid taking sides on issues until you have had a chance to think them through carefully.

- Establish excellent rapport with your school administrators early in the school year. If you say you will do something, do it.
- Don't join extra committees if you are not required to do so the first year, but helping out here and there with extra assignments will really give you bonus points!
- Find out who's who in the district administration. You may not see these people often, but you should know their names and roles. See Resource 1.2, School District Roster.
- Observe how staff members interact with each other, with the principal, with students, and with parents.
- Strive to do a good job—give it your all. Your efforts will be noticed, and you will become known as a conscientious worker and a positive addition to your school community.
- Learn how much input parents have into the programs of the school.
- Take note of the teachers' attitudes toward students, parents, and the community.
- Find out to what extent teachers criticize policies and practices of the school or central office administration.

As you apply yourself to these strategies, you will get a better understanding of your school's inner workings. You will also discover which teachers your principal often calls on for assistance, listens to, and what is expected from them in return. Do you feel an easy camaraderie with these teachers? If so, consider yourself fortunate. At the same time, be careful. You do not know these teachers well yet. If they object to something you may be doing at school, these teachers can easily report their observations to the principal without your knowledge. Make sure you allow enough time to find out who is who on your school's staff before you confide in, complain to, or criticize anyone.

Norms and Expectations

Learning what is expected, both formally and informally, is a crucial part of fitting into your new workplace. Learn your school's norms and expectations. Some of these are described in your contract, handbooks, and school policies.

- Learn the procedures for student discipline, parent communication, and student reporting, maintaining student records, phone and e-mail communication procedures, and confidentiality.
- Learn the expectations and policies regarding playground and lunch duty, tardy and absentee procedures, staff meetings, parent conferences, religious observances, teacher work days, visitor sign in and strangers on campus, sick leave and substitutes, and fire, earthquake, hurricane, or other disaster and emergency procedures.

Many recent reform movements are trying to encourage teachers to work together more closely. One such reform currently taking hold in many districts across the nation is the formation of *professional learning communities* (PLCs).

Professional Learning Communities

The 1980s marked the beginning of the research and implementation of *professional learning communities*. The idea grew out of research suggesting that teachers who felt supported by means of teacher networks, cooperation among colleagues, and expanded professional roles increased their own sense of teacher efficacy and were more likely to remain in the profession. The implementation of a PLC model can and will look different among districts and even individual school sites. The overall goal, however, is the same—to assist teachers to work collaboratively on planning instruction, observing in each other's classrooms, and sharing feedback. This is great news for teachers such as yourself, and it is an exciting time to be entering the profession.

Five Attributes of Professional Learning Communities

- Supportive and shared leadership
- Collective creativity
- Shared values and vision
- Supportive conditions
- Shared personal practice

ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS TO HELP YOU SUCCEED

New teachers may seek help from many sources, depending on the need. Begin with your mentor if you have one, your grade-level coordinator, or other grade-level teachers. Your principal will assist you with challenging situations regarding students and parents. Feel free to turn to the teacher in a neighboring classroom or to any other friendly colleague. In most cases, you can get needed information or suggestions by asking someone directly. Most teachers will be genuinely interested in helping whenever possible. Determine the best time of day to approach staff members or others. In emergencies, of course, seek help immediately! In other cases, you may choose to wait until lunch or break times, the end of the school day, or maybe even the following morning. Give teachers time to respond to your questions or requests. When you are sensitive to others' schedules, you will find they have more time and appear more relaxed and ready to answer questions. If you feel uncomfortable, preface your inquiry with an opener such as

"I've been wondering . . ."

"Would you know . . ."

"I still don't understand . . ."

"I haven't seen anything about . . ."

"Have you received . . ."

"I've noticed that . . ."

The following sections provide information on how to establish good working relationships with the principal, staff members, and others who can help you succeed.

The Principal

The principal has a strong influence on the climate of the school. Most principals are effective, competent instructional leaders who will be able to help you with student-management issues, parent issues, and with a myriad of other concerns. Your principal is responsible for everything and everyone in the school. Think of your principal as your ally. You can expect your principal to be fair and supportive of teachers and to have students' best interests in mind. Your principal is there to give you as much support during your first year as possible, but because of the vast responsibilities of that position, your principal may not be as available to you as you might wish.

Find out if you are required to make an appointment to see the principal or if you can approach the principal in the hallway, send notes or e-mails, or meet before or after school. Ask your principal what types of behavioral and discipline situations or issues with parents she needs to know about. If you're not sure, ask. Become familiar with your school's policies regarding injuries and other emergencies. You are typically required to inform the principal immediately about injuries, emergencies, or other urgent situations.

Usually, the principal or assistant principal evaluates teachers. Find out what the procedures are for your evaluation. Find out which administrator is responsible, what the evaluation form looks like, what you are expected to do (such as perform a particular lesson in your class), and when and how frequently you will be evaluated. In addition to formal evaluations, your principal may informally visit your classroom without prior notice, especially during your first year. Become accustomed to such visits. A quick acknowledgment of the principal's arrival will let the students know you welcome the visit. Then, continue with business as usual. The principal will quietly move about the room, perhaps interacting with a student or two. After a few visits, you will become quite comfortable and feel much more at ease being observed. This increased sense of confidence will carry over during formal observations.

During your orientation meeting, the principal will usually review many of the items on the School Information Checklist (see Resource 1.3) as well as other questions and concerns you and other new teachers may have. Ask questions—do not rely on assumptions. Using the information obtained at this meeting, develop your own To Do list, consisting of forms to complete, deadlines, after-hours building use, parking, lesson plan and scheduling requirements, and many other things you will need to do and know. Post the checklist and supporting information near your desk, and work your way through it from the most urgent items to the least.

Mentors

Experienced teachers are logical sources of assistance, support, and feedback for beginning teachers. Many school systems are now providing all their new teachers with mentors. Mentoring is an effective way to support and retain capable new teachers, as well as to assist them in improving their teaching abilities. One of the most important staff relationships you will develop will be with your mentor. Typically, mentors

are teachers with several years of experience at your school and grade level. Even if your mentor happens to now teach a lower or higher grade, your mentor will still be familiar with your students' age level and perhaps with many of your students' families. Feel fortunate if you are employed in a school in which you can count on help from an experienced colleague assigned to provide professional advice and assistance. Such a mentor provides tremendous teaching as well as emotional support for you as you deal with the concerns, challenges, and issues of a beginner teacher. Ask your principal if your school offers new teachers mentors formally. If not, find an experienced colleague you have become friendly with. Mention that you could use some suggestions on grouping certain students, for instance, or ideas about how to handle a recent classroom management problem. Assure this colleague that you will not need a great deal of time. Be clear about what you are asking for—that you could learn a lot about teaching reading from the colleague, for example, or that you would love to hear more about her students' successful work with math manipulatives. Find common ground. Be genuine and gracious. Remark that you are hoping for a chance to work more closely with someone, and that you will truly appreciate any time she is able to spare.

If your colleague agrees, you may have found an invaluable support. When someone expresses interest in helping, you may have found a mentor. On the other hand, he may politely decline, citing other commitments that make it difficult to consult with you. In that case, go ahead and approach other colleagues. Your respectful inquiries will be rewarded eventually.

New-Teacher Induction Programs

While many schools cannot provide individual mentors for each new teacher, many schools and districts will have a formal induction program in place. Induction programs are typically two-year training and support programs for new teachers. Such programs are mandated in many states. Your support provider may or may not work at your site. Some support providers no longer work in classrooms. However, be assured that all support providers have been formally trained in the induction program and are eager to work with you. Be sure to ask your principal if you are eligible for participation in a new-teacher induction program.

A Good Mentor-Protégé Relationship

Working with a mentor is like having a friend who understands anxieties and concerns about teaching. Your mentor is also familiar with all those subtle nuances of your school and its informal and formal norms. In return, you must establish a good relationship with your mentor. Much will depend on the respect the two of you develop for each other.

Research on mentor-protégé relationships has found that their success is generally based on two major factors: (1) whether the protégé respects the mentor as a person, and (2) whether the protégé admires the mentor's knowledge, experience, and style. By the same token, a mentor must feel comfortable working with a new teacher. Ideally, a new teacher and mentor will get along both personally and professionally.

The following traits characterize the sort of person who becomes a good new-teacher protégé. Check off all those traits you already possess.

- _____ Has a positive, proactive attitude
- _____ Is complimentary more often than critical in interactions with others
- _____ Can take constructive criticism positively
- _____ Can self-reflect and even laugh at self
- _____ Is conscientious and well organized
- _____ Is ambitious and shows determination and perseverance
- _____ Has a willingness to accept new challenges
- _____ Accepts responsibility for self, class, and students

Other Classroom Teachers

As a new teacher, you will find that your colleagues' attitudes and interactions help set the climate of the school. Some schools will, as a whole, be more welcoming and nurturing to newcomers than others. Most often, you will find a supportive faculty willing to share materials and ideas and serve as informal mentors. Look for collegiality with teachers who are positive and helpful while avoiding those who seem negative. As you demonstrate your competence and willingness to learn, you will gradually gain acceptance. Remember, you are launching your professional career, not just your first class.

Similar to schoolwide projects, many schools require all teachers to volunteer for schoolwide committee work. These committees are part of the day-to-day functioning of the school. Some principals exempt first-year teachers from such requirements. Find out the protocol at your school, and be ready to volunteer if it is required. You may look to your principal or mentor teacher for advice in selecting the right committee—one that does not require prior experience or an enormous amount of time.

Do offer to help with schoolwide projects—it is important to spend some time and energy making a positive impact on your school as a whole. Pick one significant project that interests you and that will allow you to network with professional colleagues. Your contribution will be noticed. But, also learn to say no, refusing to allow too many extras to be added to your assignment. You might also be tutoring students after school, or you may be taking graduate courses one or two nights a week. You also need time to take care of yourself. Avoid overextending yourself in your first years.

Classified Staff Members

All classified staff members in the building have roles that directly or indirectly affect students' learning and the climate of the school. It is important to treat classified staff members with the utmost courtesy and respect. They often know much about their school and community and can be wonderful resources for a new teacher.

Administrative Assistants

These invaluable staff members have a great deal of informal authority and often have the last word on how things need to be done, school procedures, and many of the “where, when, whats, and hows” that you will need to know on a daily basis! These include details such as field-trip and driver forms, reimbursements, supplies, substitute procedures, setting the school alarm, use of office equipment (such as the photocopy machine), attendance procedures, reduced-price lunches, location of cumulative records (“cum files”), and various parent and teacher forms.

Custodians

Do not overlook the importance of these staff members! Establish a positive relationship with custodians by letting them know you are most appreciative of the work they do, and try to cooperate with their procedures. Find out how they want to have things done.

- How do custodians want the classroom to look at the end of the school day? Should chairs be placed on the desks? Should whiteboards be cleaned? Should tables be cleared?
- What are the procedures for dealing with spills or young children’s “accidents”?
- What is the procedure for making needed classroom repairs? Will custodians be available to make minor repairs, or is a separate maintenance request required for these tasks?
- What is the procedure for getting new supplies, furniture, and equipment in the room?
- How do you obtain such items as classroom paper towels, soap, hand sanitizer, and sponges?

Instructional Aides

Instructional aides, or educational support personnel, are important assistants working under your direction. Although in many schools instructional aides are not assigned to each classroom, many teachers will reap the benefits of the additional instructional support they can provide for an hour or more per day. Instructional aides can help with certain types of instruction, such as working with individual children or with small groups of students. Some schools require aides to spend all their time working directly with students. In other schools, aides divide their time between noninstructional activities and working directly with students. Be sure to find out the expectations in your school.

Instructional activities you might assign to aides could include the following:

- Providing small groups of students with support in specific subjects
- Helping students who were absent catch up on missed work
- Helping students with class projects
- Helping struggling students with assignments
- Checking work and responding in writing to student journals
- Working with a small group directing an activity

Noninstructional activities might include the following:

- Helping with record keeping, portfolios, and filing
- Preparing bulletin boards and other instructional materials
- Duplicating, gathering, and distributing materials

If you have the assistance of an instructional aide, it may be that the time spent together is limited, and there is not time to meet without students. If at all possible, however,

- Allow time for you and your aide to meet and exchange introductions, to share your educational philosophy and teaching priorities, and to establish good rapport;
- As you train your aide for tasks, model as well as explain;
- Remember also that teacher aides observe what goes on in the classroom and interact with parents and other school staff; insist that your aide respect the confidentiality of students and interactions in the classroom at all times;
- Create a positive and cooperative classroom atmosphere; your students need to see you and your aide working together as a team—give your aide stature as your “assistant teacher”; and
- Always provide specific, helpful feedback that acknowledges good efforts and successful approaches, even when suggesting strategies for improvement.

Volunteers

Volunteers may include parents, high school and college students, and community members. Parents may comprise the most frequent volunteers in the classroom, depending on your school. In some communities, volunteers are more available than in others, depending on family structures, parent commitments, and the parents’ employment status. Volunteers can provide valuable extra assistance and attention to students who may need additional support. Many teachers invite volunteers to share special talents, such as teaching art or discussing careers. Some teachers use volunteers only for short times or special projects or for assistance with noninstructional classroom responsibilities. Your school is likely to have policies or informal norms regarding the use of volunteers. Find out what these expectations are from your administrator and mentor. Then, consider the following strategies for working successfully with volunteers:

1. Discuss whether you and your students would be likely to benefit from volunteers in your classroom. For instance, would volunteers be especially helpful for certain subjects or times of the day?
2. Find out if your school district has a well-established volunteer program and, if so, how it works and how you can use it. Inform your principal about your interest in using volunteers in your classroom.
3. If permitted, actively recruit volunteers: parents, community members, college students, or seniors.

4. Decide early on which tasks you will have volunteers do. If you have time early in September, hold a volunteer orientation meeting. Let them know your expectations.
5. Screen potential volunteers. Don't commit to them until you have seen them in action in the classroom. Ask yourself, "Are they good role models for students? Are they reliable? Are they available when I need them? If they are parents of children in my class, how will students react? Can volunteers be trusted with confidential information about students?" It is important that potential volunteers keep confidential any personal information about students they might observe in the classroom.
6. Make volunteers feel welcome in your class. Get them involved in class activities as soon as possible after they have expressed an interest in helping. Whenever possible, give them a regular schedule.
7. Clarify any misinterpretations or misunderstandings that may occur. Never criticize volunteers in front of individual children or the class. (This admonition applies to aides, parents, and other staff, as well.)
8. Informally monitor the work volunteers are doing. Troubleshoot when necessary. Recognize and value the work volunteers do.

See Chapter 8 for more on parent volunteers.

Specialists Who Work With the Entire Class or Grade Level

Another resource available to you may be the various specialists who work with your students. Specialists are usually adjunct staff members, including physical education, music, technology and media, art, and foreign language teachers. With today's tight finances in typical school districts, specialists must often divide their time between two or more schools. Specialists might meet with a whole class or grade level once or twice a week, or they may meet as little as once every other week. Depending on the credential status of the specialist, you may be expected to stay with your class during these sessions. If not, the time your class is with the specialist may count as your prep time. Check your school's policies and schedules for these special classes. Here are some guidelines for working with specialists:

- If your school has regularly scheduled specialists, you will receive a printed schedule of specialists serving your students. If specialists complete their own schedules, work with these teachers in planning days and times that are acceptable to you both. Record this schedule into your plan book, review the schedule with your students and their families, and post this schedule in your room.
- Whether specialists take your entire class to another area or work in your room, be sure to have your students ready on time, and be understanding if the specialist's previous class runs a few minutes late.

- Help the specialist learn the names of your students. Have your students wear nametags the first month of school. Give the specialist a printed copy of your students' pictures. Inform the specialist of any special circumstances, learning differences, or behavior issues that they need to know.
- All your students should know the rules for behavior in and out of the classroom and for working with other adults at school. Set up consistent expectations, and stick to them. (See Chapter 4 for more on discipline.)

Specialists Who Work With Individuals or Small Groups

This group of staff members includes teachers and other resource specialists who work with students in providing additional support in areas that may include reading, math, study strategies, social and behavioral support, counseling, English language development, gifted and talented programs, occupational therapy, and speech. Some of your students may be pulled out in order to meet with these professionals, although in most school districts students are required to be in their regular classes for "sacred" reading and math periods. You will be expected to work collaboratively with specialists in setting up schedules and working with students. Some specialists may work in the classroom as "push in" support, while others will have students meet outside of the classroom for "pull out" sessions. Different schools have different specialists accessible to them. Consider yourself very fortunate if your school has these professionals available. They are important resources to both your students and yourself. If you do work with them, try to meet regularly to monitor progress and goals so that you can develop consistency and work together collaboratively in and out of the classroom.

Discuss with a mentor or colleague ways to enable students to make up work they may have missed while they were out of the classroom. Think about the instruction and concepts students may have missed, rather than simply whether assignments were completed. Perhaps not all missed class work needs to be made up.

Substitute Teachers

Remember that substitute teachers are professional colleagues, too. Most substitutes are competent and well prepared, but they need your help and your students' cooperation. From time to time, remind your students how you expect them to behave for substitute teachers. The following suggestions will help your substitutes do a better job in your classroom:

- Prepare a folder for the substitute teacher ahead of time with some generic lesson plans in the event of an emergency when you may not have time to plan accordingly for the substitute. If you know you will be out, carefully plan the day with the substitute in mind. Place the sub folder with lesson plans, student nametags, and all

necessary information and materials in an accessible location. Your sub folder should include

- Detailed weekly and daily schedules, including specialist schedules, volunteers, any special events, and other specialists working with students;
 - Student names and attendance report procedures;
 - Bell schedule, recess and lunch times;
 - Emergency procedures and plans for fire and disaster drills;
 - Information about students who require special services and those who are assigned special duties;
 - Names and room numbers of helpful teachers;
 - Names of any volunteers working in the classroom;
 - Notes about school and classroom policies and procedures for discipline; and
 - Dismissal procedures and lists of children who go to after-school care, if applicable. (See Resources 1.6 and 1.7 for a sample letter and schedule and a feedback form to include in your sub folder.)
- Avoid scheduling a test or a quiz that your substitute would have to monitor.
 - Avoid expecting the substitute to teach a new content area or introduce new curriculum. Avoid lessons incorporating materials or laboratory supplies that may require special procedures to use or are difficult to manage.
 - Leave complete and specific instructions. The substitute may not be knowledgeable about your specific grade level or the content areas you want taught in your absence.
 - Leave the names of one or two especially responsible students to assist with daily routines, operate computer or technology equipment, or answer questions.
 - Leave one day's activities as a special emergency plan in case your regular lessons (e.g., a complicated writer's workshop) might be difficult for the substitute to follow. Include sufficient worksheets for your students to complete.
 - Try not to be absent on Mondays and Fridays. Such absences tend to be viewed with skepticism by colleagues and administrators: "Is that teacher really ill—or just trying to extend the weekend?"
 - Have a "buddy" teacher who can welcome your substitute and offer help. When you return, check with your buddy to see how effective the sub was in the classroom. This arrangement can be reciprocal.
 - Remember, you do not have control over what the substitute does or does not do during the day. When you return, ask the children how the day went, and then put the day behind you, and begin anew.
 - If possible, inform the children ahead of time that you will be absent, and preview the coming day's assignments. This preparation demonstrates to students your confidence and expectations that they can handle your absence cooperatively and respectfully.

KEY TERMINOLOGY AND SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Educators use many terms, acronyms, and abbreviations for various programs, characteristics, and organizations. Understanding the jargon enables you to converse with the other insiders and helps you build working relationships with them. For a list of common terms and programs, see Education Terms (Resource 1.4) and Programs for Students With Special Needs (Resource 1.5).

TAKING INITIATIVE AND REACHING OUT

Your school, like all others, is a complex social organization with its own history, culture, values, beliefs, and expectations. You will be working not only with students but also with colleagues, administrators, and parents. Although your teaching effectiveness in the classroom is important, your interactions in the professional culture of your school are crucial to surviving and flourishing in your first year and beyond.

Do not become isolated! You must consciously make time in the school day to interact professionally and personally with your colleagues. No one expects you to be perfect. You cannot have learned everything you need to know about teaching from your university preparation program, no matter how effective that program may have been. No one is ever totally prepared for the myriad day-to-day challenges of the classroom. Becoming a good teacher takes initiative, practice, and support. Yes, major challenges lie ahead. But this is an exciting time—jump in, smile, and don't forget to breathe!

RESOURCE 1.1

School Roster

You will most likely receive a school roster listing all the names, phone extensions, e-mail addresses, and emergency contact information of all the certified and classified staff at your school. Keep this list accessible, and make a copy to keep at home. Besides all the teachers, you will want to know all the other staff members.

Principal:	Phone	E-mail
Assistant Principal:	Phone	E-mail
Administrative Assistants:	Phone	E-mail
Custodian:	Phone	E-mail
Food Service Personnel:	Phone	E-mail
Nurse:	Phone	E-mail
Counselor/School Psychologist:	Phone	E-mail
Social Worker:	Phone	E-mail
Physical Education Teacher:	Phone	E-mail
Music/Band Teacher:	Phone	E-mail
Art Teacher:	Phone	E-mail
Library/Media Person:	Phone	E-mail
Bus Supervisors:	Phone	E-mail
Instructional Aides:	Phone	E-mail

Room Parents:	Phone	E-mail
PTA President:	Phone	E-mail
PTA Vice President:	Phone	E-mail
Speech Therapist:	Phone	E-mail
Resource Specialist:	Phone	E-mail
Special Education Teacher:	Phone	E-mail
Playground Supervisors:	Phone	E-mail

RESOURCE 1.2

School District Roster

These are district-level people you may need to contact.

Superintendent:	Phone	E-mail
Superintendent's Assistant:	Phone	E-mail
District Office Assistant:	Phone	E-mail
Business Office Manager:	Phone	E-mail
Business Services Assistant:	Phone	E-mail
Director of Facilities/Maintenance:	Phone	E-mail
School District Board of Trustees President:	Phone	E-mail
School Board Representative:	Phone	E-mail
PTA President:	Phone	E-mail
Foundation Board of Directors:	Phone	E-mail
Transportation Office:	Phone	E-mail
Substitute Number:	Phone	E-mail

RESOURCE 1.3**School Information Checklist**

Here are some important questions to have answered by your school principal before school begins, if they have not already been addressed during new teacher work days:

- _____ 1. How do I get the keys to my classroom or other rooms to which I may need access?
- _____ 2. If necessary furniture is not in my room, how can I get additional tables, student desks, and so on?
- _____ 3. Will I be working with any students with special needs? English language learners, physically impaired, or resource students? Do they, or any other students, leave my room during the day? If so, what are their schedules, and how can I familiarize myself with their cum files? Can I meet with them and their families before school begins? Do any of my students have special needs that require accommodations in my room arrangement or instructional methods?
- _____ 4. Will an instructional aide be assigned to work with me and, if so, what is the schedule?
- _____ 5. What are the school rules and policies I will need to present to students?
- _____ 6. What are the procedures for obtaining classroom books, supplies, and materials and for issuing them to students?
- _____ 7. What expendable supplies are available, and what are the procedures for obtaining them?
- _____ 8. What media and technology tools are available for me and my students to have access to, and what are the procedures for obtaining them?
- _____ 9. What is the procedure for the arrival of students, recording attendance, and dismissal on the first day of school and for every day after that? (See also numbers 13 and 17.)
- _____ 10. What will my specialist schedule look like?
- _____ 11. How do students leave at the end of the day? Do I have any bus riders? Do I have children going to day care or other activities on or off campus I need to be aware of?
- _____ 12. What policies do I need to be aware of, and how do I get assistance from the office for emergencies, illness, or discipline problems?
- _____ 13. What are the office procedures for early dismissal and late arrivals?
- _____ 14. Is a school nurse available? What are appropriate reasons for making a referral?

- ____15. Is a counselor or school psychologist available? What types of referrals does she want?
- ____16. What district resources are available for support in working with students with learning or behavior problems?
- ____17. What custodial services are available for my room, and what should I do if there is an emergency cleanup need?
- ____18. To what parts of the building may I send students (library, restroom, etc.), and what procedures do I follow to send them?
- ____19. What is the bell schedule? (Are there bells?)
- ____20. How can I get a district and school calendar and roster?
- ____21. Where are student cum files kept? What are the procedures to access them?
- ____22. Will I be assigned a mentor or a buddy teacher? Will I participate in a new-teacher induction program?
- ____23. What is the policy for visitors to sign in before coming on campus?
- ____24. When are you (the principal) available, and for what purposes should I be certain to consult with you?
- ____25. Are there any special events or assemblies I need to be aware of in the first weeks of school?

RESOURCE 1.4

Education Terms

4th Friday Count	Attendance records on which state aid is based in some states
ACT	American College of Testing
ADA	Average daily attendance—a count of students in attendance, on which state funding amounts are based
ADD	Attention deficit disorder
ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
(__) AEYC	(State) Association for the Education of Young Children
AFT	American Federation of Teachers
AI	Autistically impaired
(__) ASCD	(State) Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
ASCD	Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
At-Risk	Students who are low achieving because of a number of factors
CAT	California Achievement Test
CTBS	Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills
(__) CTM	(State) Council of Teachers of Mathematics
Cum files	Cumulative records for students
(__) EA	(State) Education Association
(__) EAP	(State) Education Assessment Program
EBD	Emotional-behavior disorder
ECE	Early childhood education
EDY	Educationally disadvantaged youth
EI	Emotionally impaired
ELD	English language development
ELL	English language learner
EMI	Emotionally and mentally impaired
ERIC	Educational Resource Information Center
ESD	Educational Service District
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1988, which provides funds to districts to meet needs of EDY
ESL	English as a second language
FEP	Fluent English proficient
GATE	Gifted and talented education

(Continued)

(Continued)

HI	Hearing impaired
IEP	Individualized education plan
IRA	International Reading Association
ISD	Intermediate school district
IT	Technology support
ITBS	Iowa Tests of Basic Skills
ITIP	Instructional theory into practice
LD	Learning disabled
LEP	Limited English proficient
LRE	Least restrictive environment
LS	Learning specialist
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
NCLB	No Child Left Behind Act
NCSS	National Council of Social Studies
NCTE	National Council of Teachers of English
NCTM	National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
NEA	National Education Association
NEP	Non-English proficient
Para-Pro	Paraprofessional
PET	Parent effectiveness training
PLC	Professional learning communities
POHI	Physically and otherwise health impaired
(__) RA	(State) Reading Association
RTI	Response to intervention
SAT	Scholastic Aptitude Test
SCE	State Compensatory Education
SPED ED	Special education
SST	Student study team
TBS	Test of Basic Skills
TC	Teacher consultant
TET	Teacher effectiveness training
VI	Visually impaired

RESOURCE 1.5

Programs for Students With Special Needs

Students with specific educational needs have the opportunity to participate in specifically funded programs. These programs are designed to provide additional assistance for identified students. Some of the specifically funded projects that may be available at your school site are included here.

Title I

Students who score below the 40th percentile in reading and/or mathematics on a standardized achievement test such as the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) are identified as educationally disadvantaged youth (EDY). EDY is a federal designation for students whose educational attainment is below the level appropriate for their age made on the basis of a nationally norm-referenced test. If your school is a Title I school, identified students are eligible to receive extra help in reading, mathematics, and language arts. Federal funds are allocated for this purpose. How students receive this service varies.

State Compensatory Education

State Compensatory Education (SCE) funds are allocated by most states to provide extra service and support for students who fall below the 40th percentile on standardized achievement tests.

Limited English Proficient/Title VII

Some students are identified as limited English proficient (LEP) or non-English proficient (NEP). Federal funds are allocated for the purpose of providing extra service and support for these students until they reach the level of fluent English proficient (FEP).

Special Education Programs

Students who are eligible for special education programs have been referred, identified, assessed, and placed in the most suitable programs. Individualized education plans (IEPs) will recommend the extent to which such students should be mainstreamed into regular classrooms. Placement follows the convention of the least restrictive environment (LRE).

Gifted and Talented Education Program

Students in gifted and talented education (GATE) programs are provided supplementary services that usually include an emphasis on reasoning skills, creative problem solving, and evaluative thinking. Some gifted and talented programs also address spatial intelligences and artistic and leadership abilities. A variety of teaching styles and materials are used to support and challenge students while developing their abilities.

RESOURCE 1.6

Sample Cover Letter for a Substitute Folder

Date _____

Dear (substitute's name if you know it) Substitute:

I've prepared the information in this folder to provide you with a good deal of general information about my class and schedule. Whenever possible, I'll furnish specific daily lesson plans in addition to the enclosed materials. I hope this folder is useful and that you have a good day with my group.

Instructional aide: _____ Times: _____

Student helpers: _____

Parent volunteers: _____

Specialists: _____

Special event/activities/project: _____

Office number: _____

Teacher next door if you need assistance: _____

When you finish the day, please complete the feedback sheet, and return it to the office with the folder. Thanks for your help.

Sincerely,

Teacher: _____ Room: _____ Grade: _____

Home phone number: _____

Inside this folder you will find:

- Attendance forms
- Building and playground rules
- Class list
- Classroom rules
- Emergency procedures
- Feedback form for you to fill out
- Groups for centers activities
- Lesson plans for centers activities
- Lists of allergies and special needs
- Schedules (classroom and building)
- Seating chart
- Student name tags
- Students' family contact information
- Time schedule

<i>Time Schedule</i>	<i>Routine</i>
Students arrive at	
School begins at	
Recess is scheduled for	
Lunch time is	
Noon recess is	
Dismissal time is	
Specialist schedule	

RESOURCE 1.7**Feedback Form for a Substitute Folder****From Your Substitute**

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

*The day went...**The lesson plans and instruction...**The students were...**Students who were absent, tardy, or out of class**Any problems...**Comments...*